Irondequoit to Explore LED Street Lighting Initiative

Week of February 18, 2019

You often hear local government leaders lament over the unfunded mandates out of Albany that make running a government next-to-impossible. The general sentiment is that while these mandates might be well-intended, when not supplemented with state or federal funding, they increase the burden on local property tax payers.

While mandates haven’t disappeared, over the past several years, I have been very happy to see several initiatives emerge from our State government that, if taken advantage of, are working to lower the cost of operating a local government.

The Clean Energy Communities program, for instance, allowed us to execute a major solar energy project on our Public Safety Building and DPW headquarters that will save us tens of thousands of dollars on our Town’s energy bill. We will continue to look for ways to partner with other communities under the Governor’s Shared Services initiative, which incentivizes municipal cooperation. Finally, we are moving forward on a partnership with Brighton and Pittsford to procure a cheaper default electricity product for homeowners and small businesses – one that is 100% clean and green.

Every year, our Town spends hundreds of thousands of dollars on street lighting. Much of that expense goes towards the maintenance of the lights, most of which we do not even own. Further, many of the lights are inefficient and outdated. While this only represents a tiny fraction of the money you pay in your property taxes, we are right to ask the question: is there a better way?

The State of New York, as part of Governor Cuomo’s efforts to reduce our State’s greenhouse gas emissions, has commenced a bold effort to convert much of our state’s street lights to a more efficient LED technology. While there is cost associated with the conversion, LED street lights use less electricity, last longer and require less maintenance.

As part of the Smart Street Lighting NY Program, the New York Power Authority (NYPA) serves as a one-stop shop to help municipalities acquire and convert these street lights. NYPA also provides upfront financing for municipalities, who pay off such debt service with the savings realized through LED street lighting. Already, communities across the State have seen success, and executed complete LED conversions without ever seeing an increase in the budget, but rather, an instant decrease.

I am excited about this opportunity for our community. Once again, we have the chance to make a decision that is beneficial for our environment and for our property taxpayers. As I always say, it is incumbent on us to do our due diligence to see if we again can provide a win-win for Irondequoit.